



مجلس أبوظبي للتعليم
Abu Dhabi Education Council
Education First **التعليم أولاً**



Inspection Report

Emirates Private School – Abu Dhabi

Academic Year 2013 – 14

Iqraa

Emirates Private School – Abu Dhabi

Inspection Date	12 – 15 May 2014
School ID#	32
Licensed Curriculum	Ministry of Education, American and British
Number of Students	1,796
Age Range	3 to 19 years
Gender	Mixed
Principal	Amina Abdulla Ahmed
School Address	PO Box 2564, Muroor Road, Zafrana District, Shabiat Khalifa, Abu Dhabi
Telephone Number	+971 (02) 444 8863
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Official Email (ADEC)	Emiratesad.pvt@adec.ac.ae
School Website	www.emiratesprivate.sch.ae
Date of last inspection	6 – 9 May 2012

The overall effectiveness of the school

Inspectors considered the school in relation to 3 performance categories

Band A High performing (overall effectiveness grade 1, 2 or 3)

Band B Satisfactory (overall effectiveness grade 4 or 5)

Band C In need of significant improvement (overall effectiveness grade 6, 7 or 8)

The School was judged to be:	BAND B;	GRADE 5
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The main strengths of the school are:

- the school has a strong ethos of care for all, characterized by warm relationships and mutual respect. The principal enjoys the respect and affection of the whole school
- the progress made by students in the British section has improved, especially in the upper school
- the strong promotion of UAE culture, values and heritage
- students show positive attitudes, behave well and attend regularly.

The main areas for improvement are:

- language development skills in younger grades and provision of sufficient opportunities for extended writing throughout the school
- the quality of evaluation of classroom practice to ensure adequate focus on the impact of teaching on learning
- the use of assessment data to plan for the next steps in learning, especially for more able students
- the development of skills such as independent learning, critical thinking and research.

Introduction

The school was inspected by 5 inspectors. They observed 111 lessons and met with the principal, teachers, social workers and support staff, parents and students. The inspectors observed assemblies, break periods, and students' arrival at and departure from the school. They considered test and assessment results, scrutinized students' work across the school, analysed 83 responses to the parent's questionnaire about the school and considered many of the school's policies and other documents. The principal and senior team were involved throughout the inspection process and observed lessons with inspectors.

Description of the School

The Emirates Private School is part of the Emirates Education Group. It opened in 1982 in the Zafrana District of Abu Dhabi, aiming to provide excellent education for all students. Its vision is 'to pass on the light of knowledge and skills in the future generation so that students expand their physical and intellectual horizons'. There are 1,796 students in total: 1,044 boys and 752 girls. There are 4 distinct sections within the school: the KG has 324 children, the Arabic section has 311 students in grades 1 to 12 studying the Ministry of Education (MOE) Curriculum, the British section has 867 students from grades 1 to 12 and the American section has 294 students in grades 10 to 12. Girls and boys are taught together up to grade 5 and in separate class sections thereafter. The school is selective, with examinations for entry to all grades and curriculum types.

98.8% of students are Muslim and 96.3% are of Arabic heritage. The largest proportion of students is Emiratis at 35.4%, while the other significant groups are: Egyptian 28.4%, Jordanian 7.1%, Sudanese 5.1%, Yemeni 4.1% and Syrian 3.9%. There are small numbers from other, mainly Arabic, countries. The school has identified 9 students as having special educational needs (SEN) including Downs Syndrome and autism. There are 249 students identified with gifts or talents. Fees range from AED 9,590 in KG to AED 16,375 for the upper school.

There are 136 full-time teachers.

The Effectiveness of the School

Students' attainment & progress

Students are admitted to the school on the basis of their performance in entrance examinations in Arabic, English and mathematics. From grade 1, most students choose to follow the British curriculum. Most of these students then choose the American high school curriculum from grades 10 to 12.

Attainment is at or approaching international standards across most subjects, except English and science within the American section. Examination results in English at the British International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) have improved and now exceed those found in many other countries. This is particularly so at the highest grades of A and A*. Students' performance in other external examinations shows no consistent trend over recent years. Results are at least average when compared with other schools offering similar courses.

Progress made by most students in all subjects is satisfactory. With more challenge, higher ability students could make better progress than they do. Students with SEN progress well because of the support they receive. The progress made by students following the British curriculum in the upper school is better than elsewhere. This is particularly so in Arabic, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT).

In KG classes, children know the sounds of several letters in Arabic and English. They cannot yet use this knowledge to blend sounds of more than one letter or to decode words. Their progress in counting and number work is satisfactory. In science, they can name some fruit and vegetables and demonstrate suitable knowledge of their benefits in diet. As they progress through the primary grades, students' acquisition of basic skills in literacy is satisfactory. They understand sentence structure and widen their vocabulary in both Arabic and English. The development of spoken and written language by some students is limited. In some classes, there are insufficient opportunities to practise speaking by explaining answers with reasons and writing at greater length.

The rate of students' progress gradually quickens through the middle and upper grades. Girls make better progress than boys but this difference is not significant. In most grades, students are starting to develop independent learning and critical thinking skills through practical activities in science and ICT. They solve problems, learn to think logically and present data in mathematics. In other subjects, these skills are rarely practised.

Records are kept of students' destinations when they leave the school; several returned during the inspection to talk of their success in higher education. They all

appreciate the start that the school has given them and feel well prepared for the future.

Students' personal development

Students clearly enjoy coming to school and have positive attitudes to learning. This is reflected in their behaviour in class and around the school building. Attendance is well above average at 98%. Students are developing in self-confidence. They readily greet visitors warmly and are respectful towards each other and adults. They feel comfortable with their national and religious identity and understand that others may hold different views and beliefs. All respect the UAE flag and national anthem at assemblies. Each day, students take part in ceremonies and presentations to school audiences. Some students act as prefects or help SEN students to learn the alphabet. On one occasion, a grade 7 boy used a self-made power point to talk about fast food to his class. This was one of few opportunities seen in lessons to develop leadership skills.

Students learn to work and play together happily. They develop an appreciation of art and music through the curriculum. A fabulous afternoon of music, dance and performance for the school's 'International Day' brought all sections of the school together. Students are building a strong understanding of the history and customs of the Arab world through visiting the school's heritage centre. They are developing a sound understanding of how to live safe and healthy lives through the curriculum implementation and the work of medical staff. They appreciate the importance of protecting the environment and use recyclable materials for much of their imaginative and colourful artwork.

The quality of teaching and learning

Most teachers have strong subject knowledge and understand how children learn effectively. In the best lessons, this enables them to expand on the content of textbooks. Relationships in classrooms are warm, respectful and support learning well. Students enjoy learning by doing. Teachers encourage collaborative work through group tasks and the sharing of resources. Practical work in science and active participation in physical education (PE) enable students to work both independently and as part of a team. Most teachers do not provide enough opportunities to develop these and other skills such as research, creative thinking and interpreting data.

The school assesses students regularly and analyses the results of tests to identify gaps in knowledge. Performance is compared from one term to the next. Students say that they know how well they are achieving because teachers give them regular verbal feedback. This begins a useful dialogue about progress and benchmarks for improvement. Marking and comments in books are less

consistently helpful across the school. The assessment data available to teachers is not used sufficiently to plan students' next steps in learning. This is particularly so for more able learners.

Teaching is most effective when visual resources are used to help students to link words with examples of real things. Video clips, PowerPoint presentations and pictures support good language development. This approach also stimulates student's interest and helps to motivate the boys.

Meeting students' needs through the curriculum

The school offers a choice of curriculum from grade 1 to grade 12. These are the Ministry of Education (MoE) curriculum, a British curriculum leading to IGCSE and AS/A Level, and a high school American curriculum. These three learning pathways give the school a truly international appeal. Most students following the British curriculum opt for the American programme from grade 10. This is examined by Scholastic Assessment Tests (SAT) which are an admissions requirement for most USA colleges or universities.

The curriculum implementation as a whole is broad, balanced and relevant. The core subjects are supplemented by art, music, PE and French in the main school. The high school offers accountancy, business studies, economics and psychology. Non-native Arabic speakers are offered a modified course in Arabic, Islamic education and social studies. There are educational visits and many activities and events throughout the year. These enrich students' learning experiences. The school discontinued the extra-curricular clubs introduced on trial basis, because parents did not want their children to stay late after school.

There is a consistent approach to planning across all three curricula, supported by a common lesson planning format. This promotes the development of skills such as collaborative working through planned pair and group work. It also ensures that the heritage, culture and values of the UAE feature across most subjects.

The curriculum planning and delivery in KG is under-developed. There are very few play-based or child-initiative opportunities. Almost all activities are led by teachers or other adults. There is no provision for KG children to use ICT. Language development is limited by the lack of a phonics programme linking letters to sounds. This is also absent in the younger grades of the primary school. In American high school English lessons, the narrow use of textbooks constrains students' development of language for purposes such as extended writing.

The protection, care, guidance and support of students

The school has a strong ethos of care towards all who work and study there. There is a genuine community spirit, and a sense that the school operates almost as an extended family. A number of staff have served there for many years and some have left only to return at a later date. Some former students also now work at the school. Students' welfare is a high priority for the school and this extends beyond the school day for those who arrive early or leave late. The care provided for students with SEN meets their needs and supports their progress. Each SEN student has an individual education plan which details both academic and personal development. All relevant policies and procedures are in place to ensure students' well-being. This includes medical facilities and advice on healthy living.

Some older students believe that their voice is not heard through the normal channels, including the student council. Some are unaware of what the council does or what it has achieved. The principal takes time to listen to students and addresses their concerns.

The quality of the school's buildings and premises

The main school buildings are now over 30 years old, but remain in sound condition. They are well maintained and provide a satisfactory standard of accommodation for learning. Specialist areas for art and science, together with most classrooms, are spacious and support the curriculum well. Some classrooms are cramped for the number of students they accommodate. These are mainly in grade 1 and some girls' classrooms in grades 9 and 10. A few rooms have no natural daylight. Classrooms in the newer block provide a better environment for learning. The school provides 2 large and comfortable prayer rooms for students and staff.

The school is a secure and well monitored site. Guards check all visitors, who must sign in and out and carry identification. All staff and students wear name badges which are used on entry and when boarding buses. Health and safety are high priorities and any potential hazards are reported and dealt with swiftly. Chemicals are stored safely and food is handled hygienically. Although there are no lifts, the building is reasonably accessible at ground floor level.

The playgrounds provide spacious and suitably shaded areas for assemblies and recreation. The football pitch has no shade and natural grass which tends to suffer from heavy use and sun burn, making the surface difficult to play on.

The school's resources to support its aims

Resources are adequate for the number on roll and support the three curricula offered. A particular strength is the heritage centre, which has been developed

and expanded over the years. This provides a stimulating and appealing resource for browsing and learning about UAE history, traditions and culture. Facilities and equipment for science, ICT and art are satisfactory. The library is well stocked with books in Arabic and English and provides other resources for students' use.

There are limited material resources for teaching in some classrooms. These include KG and some primary and upper school classes. In such lessons, there are few visual, real life materials to support learning or there is heavy reliance on a textbook. Classrooms have interactive whiteboards and projectors, which are used well. Music resources are sparse. Students say they have only a few instruments to play. Resources to support the learning of students with SEN are satisfactory.

The school has sufficient, well qualified staff to cover the curriculum. Teachers are deployed according to their expertise and turnover is low. Safety and security on school transport are good. Buses have CCTV and can be tracked using GPS so that the school is aware of their position at any time. Procedures for boarding and arrival are well supervised.

Arrangements to verify the complete evacuation of the school when the alarm sounds are not robust enough. Students are counted at fire assembly points, but no register check is taken. This means that if a number are unaccounted for, their names would not immediately be known. School leaders are now aware of this and are taking appropriate action.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The school has a strong leadership team and a principal who is from the local community and well known to parents and students. She enjoys the respect and affection of the whole school community. Her dedication to the school over many years ensures she has a good knowledge of individual students and their backgrounds. Parents speak in glowing terms about the quality and range of contact with the school. They value the monthly meetings to discuss their children's progress. Their views are regularly canvassed and taken into account.

A self-evaluation form was completed by senior staff with contributions from other staff and parents. No justification is offered for the grades which are a little generous. The school accumulates a lot of data about students' attainment from regular assessment and examination results which are compared with averages from across the world. There are also records of classroom observations in which lessons are judged according to student performance, classroom practice and context. The criteria used are not fully aligned with the Irtiqa'a framework where the focus is on how well students are learning and how teaching brings this about.

Few weaknesses are shown and no points for development are recorded. In this regard, the school's evaluation processes are not robust enough.

Teachers and leaders have benefited from substantial professional development in recent years. This includes conferences, workshops and observations of lessons in other schools to share good practice. It is continuing to have a positive impact on teaching and learning and is a major reason why students' progress has improved. Expectations of students' outcomes in the American high school are lower than in other upper school grades. Students perceive these courses to be less challenging. There is a lack of clear guidance with regard to scope and sequence of the curriculum to set appropriate standards. The courses do not lead to a high school diploma. School leaders are aware of the need to build more rigour into this section of the school in future years.

Progress since the last inspection

The school has made substantial progress over the last two years. All areas for improvement identified at the last inspection feature in the development plan and implemented. The school has suitably addressed the breaches of regulations regarding ownership and school management or the placing of students in age-inappropriate grades. Roles and responsibilities for staff have been clarified and job descriptions agreed. The school enables parents to make choices of curriculum for their children.

Assessment data is more readily available to teachers and there are plans to develop this further. Other issues such as improvements to teachers' marking and greater parity between curricula are still being addressed. There is a clear commitment to improve further and the school's capacity to do so is satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further:

1. Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - i. providing training for senior and subject leaders in how to critically evaluate classroom practice and identify areas for improvement
 - ii. sharpening lesson observations to ensure clarity about the impact of teaching on the learning of individuals, groups and classes, addressing the question ‘Is the learning good enough?’
2. Develop teaching and learning to raise standards by:
 - i. establishing a phonics programme in KG and lower primary grades to improve language development
 - ii. encouraging students to speak at greater length, explain their answers and to write more extensively in both Arabic and English
 - iii. making use of assessment information to identify the next steps in learning for students and to ensure these challenge more able learners
 - iv. providing more opportunities in lessons for students to develop study skills such as critical thinking, research and independent learning.

Inspection Grades

	Band A High performing			Band B Satisfactory		Band C In need of significant improvement		
Performance Standard	Outstanding	Very Good	Good	Satisfactory & Improving	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Very unsatisfactory	Poor
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Standard 1: Students' attainment and progress								
Standard 2: Students' personal development								
Standard 3: The quality of teaching and learning								
Standard 4: The meeting of students' needs through the curriculum								
Standard 5: The protection, care, guidance and support of students								
Standard 6: The quality of the school's buildings and premises								
Standard 7: The school's resources to support its aims								
Standard 8: The effectiveness of leadership and management								
Summary Evaluation: The school's overall effectiveness								